

## 2009 Honorees

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### **Sidney Bell Willis**

Sidney Bell Willis is a life resident of “Real East Texas”, City of Longview. She attended Longview Public Schools and earned her Bachelor’s of Arts Degree from Texas College in Tyler, Texas. Mrs. Willis received her Master’s Degree in Education from Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Mrs. Willis taught in the Longview Public School system for 43 years. During her tenure she served as an elementary Music teacher, Middle School teacher of Reading and English and as a Special Education Counselor and retired as Elementary Counselor.

After retirement Mrs. Willis is serving as City Councilwoman for District 3. She has served for 6 years (two terms) and is now beginning her third term. She is an Emeritus member of The Longview Regional Hospital’s Stars Over Longview Advisory Board, one of the members of the Board to bring Public Transportation to Longview, one of the founding members of “Unity in the Community” which targets violence in areas of the city. She is a member of Texas Eastman’s Advisory Board, a past member of LeTourneau University’s Presidents Advisory Council and liaison to the Longview Economic Development Corporation. Sidney Willis is a seventh generation member of St. Mark C. M.E. Church where she has served as Director of Music for 45 years.

She is the proud parent of two sons, Willie, Jr. and Byron Todd Willis, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

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### **Steve Crane**

Steve Crane was born in San Francisco, California. He is married to Kathy Berry Crane and they have a son, Jacob. He is an Elder at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Crane is currently employed at the Law Office of Mary Ann Rea. He has worked as a paralegal for the Legal Services Corporation in Dallas and Longview. He was also a tenant organizer for the East Dallas Tenants' Alliance helping tenants in the low income community.

Since moving to Longview in 1980, Mr. Crane served as the first Secretary to AIDS Help of Texas, which is now Special Health Resources of Texas. He served as president of the Gregg County Early Childhood Development Center. He served as the first Vice President of the Longview Interfaith Hospitality Network. He helped start the St. Andre Community Garden and serves as the Garden Coordinator. He held many offices in his local and national union and in the regional body of the AFL-CIO, the Greater East Texas Central Labor Council. Mr. Crane worked to name a park in South Longview after Bennie Jackson, a local union activist and a plaintiff in the voting rights law suit that brought single member districts to the City of Longview.

A favorite quote is one attributed to Jimi Hendrix, "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

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### **Links:**

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[2] <http://pip.longviewtexas.gov/service/partners-prevention-youth-activitiesmentoringrace-relations>

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